Getting started with Sage Accounts
The online retailers guide
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Overview

Online retailers face a specific set of challenges when using Sage, predominantly because of the high volumes of sales and the often required need for stock control and management information. The purpose of this guide is to assist the online retailer in choosing which Sage Accounts package to use (if they haven't done so already) and discusses how the Sage software can be configured to be used to best effect in the online retail environment.

Which Sage Accounts package to use?

For SME businesses the most popular Sage Accounts packages are either Sage Instant Accounts or Sage 50 Accounts. Both packages contain variants, as follows:

- Sage Instant Accounts (IA)
- Sage Instant Accounts Plus (IA+)
- Sage 50 Accounts (S50)
- Sage 50 Accounts Plus (S50+)
- Sage 50 Accounts Professional (S50 Pro)

All of the above products contain the same layout and format of data, enabling the ability to upgrade to higher packages if required, whilst still maintaining all data previously entered.

Sage Accounts is split into the following main sections:

**Customers:** contains customer account information and records all sales, showing what sales have been made, to whom and what monies are owed to the company.

**Suppliers:** contains supplier account information and records all purchases/costs, showing what purchases/costs have been made, to whom and what monies are owed by the company.

**Bank:** contains a list of all of the company’s bank accounts (including notional accounts such as PayPal, Amazon etc) and records all transactional activity coming into or out of each bank. Allows users to reconcile entries in the Sage bank accounts against statements from the actual bank accounts to ensure every transaction has been accounted for.
**Products:** contains records for each product, including stock code, description, cost price, sales price, location, bar code, supplier, nominal code. With the exception of IA all Sage packages show a quantity in stock. Some of the main differentiators surrounding which Sage package to choose surround features available within the product record.

**Company:** contains reports, information and tools such as the nominal ledger, profit & loss, balance sheet, VAT liability, VAT returns, audit trails etc.

A **comparison table** can be found at the end of this document to assist in selection. However, from our experience the following questions are usually pertinent:

- **Do you wish to hold products with stock levels in Sage?**
  - No – IA onwards
  - Yes – IA+ onwards

- **Do you wish to have more than 1 simultaneous user accessing Sage over a network?**
  - No – IA onwards
  - Yes – IA+ onwards (minimum 2 user licence)

- **Do you wish to apply re-order levels (early warning levels) against individual products?**
  - No – IA+ onwards
  - Yes – S50+ onwards

- **Do you want to create packaged products in Sage that are assembled using other existing products (Bill of Materials)?**
  - No – IA+ onwards
  - Yes – S50+ onwards

- **Do you want to be able to create Purchase Orders for ordering stock?**
  - No – IA+ onwards
  - Yes – S50 Pro

- **Do you want to accounts for sales in a foreign currency in Sage?**
  - No – IA+ onwards
  - Yes – S50 Pro
Sage Accounts comes with a single user, single company licence as standard. Additional user licences can be purchased at an extra cost and enable the Sage software to be networked and allow simultaneous access to Sage for the number of users permitted under the licence. Similarly, if you have more than 1 company, you can purchase additional company licences. More details can be found in the comparison table.

The purchase of a Sage Accounts package is a one off cost and comes with 45 days Sage technical support. Annual support contracts can be purchased, if required. A new version of Sage Accounts is released every 12 months which generally contains new functionality. Upgrading to the latest version of Sage is possible for an additional cost. However, if you subscribe to Sage’s enhanced support service (Sage Cover Extra) this includes free version upgrades as well as ongoing technical support.

Tradebox offer a standard 10% discount of all Sage prices.

Configuring Sage Accounts

Once you have Sage installed, you need to consider the following:

- Creation of Nominal Codes for reporting
- Creation of Departments
- What Bank Accounts to create
- Setting up Suppliers
- Setting up Products
- Which method to use to record your online sales in Sage

Nominal Codes

Nominal codes form an intrinsic part of Sage Accounts and are used as a reporting/categorisation mechanism. Every purchase, expense, asset, overhead or income is allocated to a nominal code to identify it. These individual nominal codes are grouped together in Sage Accounts and are separated in ranges of 1000. For example, sales are recorded against nominal codes between 4000 and 4999, whereas purchases are recorded against nominal codes between 5000 and 5999 (assuming the default nominal codes are chosen). This data is used on internal Sage reports such as the profit and loss report or balance sheet. This way you can look at your accounts and immediately identify your income and expenditure.
With most online retailers, the first question about nominal codes surrounds sales and how these should be reported. If you are not going to carry stock in Sage then you may wish to create a sales nominal structure that reflects where you sell. When you look at your turnover on a P&L report the sales income can be split into marketplaces, as follows:

- 4000: eBay Sales
- 4001: Amazon UK Sales
- 4002: Website Sales
- 4003: Other Sales

However, if you are going to carry stock in Sage Accounts, you may wish to consider creating a sales nominal structure which reflects what you sell, regardless of marketplace:

- 4000: Kitchenware
- 4001: Electrical Goods
- 4002: Furnishings
- 4003: Bedding

If you choose to create a sales nominal structure that reflects what you sell, then each nominal code needs to be allocated against an individual Product Record in Sage.
When the sale is reported into Sage, the value of the sale of the product can be reported to the allocated nominal code. If you wish to choose this route, the nominal codes need to be created in advance of setting up the products in Sage.

To change the name of an existing nominal code in Sage, simply select the Nominal Ledger link from within the Company section, double click on an existing code and change the name. New nominal codes can also be created within the Nominal Ledger by selecting ‘New’. You may also wish to create nominal codes to record expenses against, such as eBay fees, Amazon Fees or PayPal Fees. Generally, these would sit within the 7600 range but it would be worthwhile discussing this with your accountant.

**Departments**

If you are looking to create a sales nominal structure based on what you sell, then it may be worthwhile also creating a Department list in Sage that reflects where you sell, i.e. your online marketplaces. This will allow you to utilise reporting in Sage that will show you what you’re selling and where it is being sold. To create a department list, simply choose the Department link from within the Company section of Sage and double click on an existing department number to change its name:
Bank Accounts

Different Bank Accounts can be set up in Sage to reflect the activity in each account and allow the user to reconcile each transaction that comes into or out of that account. Usually, the 1200 bank is used to reflect the activity in the company's actual high street bank.

Because many online retailers conduct high volumes of transactions, it is common for them to create notional banks in Sage to isolate online purchases in, rather than having these created in their 1200 account. In practice the sales from particular marketplaces or those using specific payment methods are accounted for in a different bank. When the money from these sales is credited to the company's actual bank the user simply creates an interbank transfer in Sage, transferring the amount from the notional account to the actual account.
Suppliers

If you are looking at setting up stock in Sage, it is worthwhile creating your supplier list first. This allows each product you hold in stock to be allocated against an existing supplier, which is helpful when it comes to ordering more stock in. Each supplier record needs to be given a unique Account Reference. This is a maximum of 8 characters, with no spaces and is the reference that is allocated against the product record, if required.

If you already have a list of suppliers available in an Excel spreadsheet or CSV file, these can be imported into Sage, as opposed to being created one by one. This is done via the Data Import wizard found in File – Import.

For information on the structure of the file press the F1 button in Sage and search for csv import.
Products

The quickest way to set up stock in Sage is to create the product list in an Excel spreadsheet and then import it into Sage. If you are selling online, the chances are that you will be able to download product information from your marketplace/website in a csv format. Whilst this is not going to contain all of the information required by Sage to set up a comprehensive list of products, it will form the start of the list. More information on the structure of the import file can be accessed from within Sage by pressing the F1 key and searching for csv import.

A template Excel spreadsheet can be downloaded by clicking here which contains sample data that can be quickly deleted and replaced with the users own product data.

Import sequence

To set up the stock in Sage Accounts, 2 separate imports need to be done in the following sequence:

1. Product Record Import: This creates the Product Record itself and contains all of the information surrounding the product such as the stock number, description, tax code, supplier etc.
2. Stock Transactions Import: This adjusts in the quantity of stock available for each product that has already been created in Sage.

The Product Record import must be done first to allow the second import to allocate a quantity in stock against an item.

Product Record Import

The following data can be imported to create a Product Record in Sage:

- Stock Code
- Description
- Tax Code
- Sales Price
- Cost Price
- Unit of Sale
- Location
- Nominal A/C Ref
- Re-Order Level
- Item Type
- Supplier A/C Ref
- Re-Order Quantity
- Weight
**Product Import - data format and rules**

**Product Code:** Often known as a SKU (Stock Keeping Unit) or Stock Code, the Product Code is a unique identifier which forms the basis of inventory. Each unique product should have its own unique code, which easily identifies the product. Up to 30 characters can be used for the product code. No spaces are allowed.

**Description:** Product name of item or description. Up to 60 characters can be used.

**Tax Code:** Refers to the tax codes as set up in Sage (usually T1 standard VAT or T0 VAT exempt). A Tax code must be allocated against each product to determine whether it is a UK vatable product.

**Sales Price:** Sales price excluding VAT.

**Cost Price:** Cost price excluding VAT. Sage will give the end user the opportunity to record the cost price of an individual product every time the stock quantity is increased and will calculate an average cost price to assist in working out product profitability.

**Unit of Sale:** Records how an item is sold, such as each, box of 10 etc

**Location:** Location of product. Very useful for picking and packing lists.

**Nominal A/C Reference:** Each product can be allocated against a nominal code to reflect the type of product that is being sold. To do this a sales nominal structure must be set up first in Sage, e.g.

- 4000: Kitchenware
- 4001: Electrical Goods
- 4002: Furnishings
- 4003: Bedding

This is useful for management information, such as identifying how gross turnover is divided into categories of products sold. The Nominal A/C reference in the import file works on a ‘lookup’ basis which means the nominal code must exist in Sage prior to importing the file.

**Re-order Level:** This is like an early warning level the end user can establish against each product to alert them to the fact that the quantity in stock is running low. When the quantity in stock for a particular Product
Record falls **beneath** the Re-Order Level, the product is displayed in red in Sage to alert the user. This facility is only available in **Sage 50 Accounts Plus** and **Professional**.

**Item Type:** Each product record can be a Stock Item, a Non-Stock Item or a Service Item. Stock Items default to enforce stock level integrity. This means invoices/orders in Sage cannot be processed where there is insufficient stock available. Non-Stock items do not allow stock levels to be tracked and there is therefore no enforcement of insufficient stock.

**Supplier A/C:** Allows the user to allocate a supplier against a particular product. This becomes particularly useful to generate supplier lists for products that are running low in stock or create Purchase Orders. The Supplier A/C reference in the import file works on a 'lookup' basis which means the Supplier A/C Reference must exist in Sage prior to importing the file. Supplier A/C references are a maximum of 8 characters long.

**Re-order Quantity:** The re-order quantity allows the user to establish default quantities to be ordered from the supplier when placing an order. Reports of products requiring re-ordering can be generated within Sage, by supplier, with these re-order quantities. This facility is only available in **Sage 50 Accounts Plus** and **Professional**.

**Weight:** Records the weight of a product in Kilograms up to 2 decimal places.

When completed, the Product record file can be imported into Sage by selecting **Tools – Import** and choosing **Product Records**.

**Always take a back up of Sage prior to importing.**

**Stock transactions Import**

Once product records have been created in Sage then quantities in stock can be allocated against them by making a stock transactions import. This file basically holds all of the Sage stock numbers with instructions to adjust a stock quantity, either IN our OUT.

The following data can be imported to create a transaction against an existing Product Record in Sage:
Transaction Import - data format and rules

Type: The Type field contains a 2 digit code which informs Sage of the action you wish to take, as follows:

AI = Adjustment In
AO = Adjustment Out
GR = Goods Returned - using credit notes
GO = Goods Out - using sales orders and product invoices
GI = Goods In - using purchase orders
DI = Damages In
DO = Damages Out
WO = Write Off

This help file deals specifically with setting up stock in Sage and is therefore only focused on the Adjustment In (AI) instruction required to allocate a specific quantity against an existing Product Record in Sage.

Stock Code: refers to the existing stock code in Sage

Date: Date for the transaction. Must be a DD/MM/YYYY format.

Reference: Reference number for the transaction

Quantity: The quantity to be added to the existing stock level for each product

Cost Price: This is the cost price excluding VAT.

Sales Price: This is the sales price excluding VAT.

When completed, the Stock Transaction file can be imported into Sage by selecting Tools – Import in Sage and choosing Stock Transactions.
Accounting for your sales

Once set up you can start recording your sales data in Sage. There are a number of different ways this can be done in Sage Accounts and each method has its own merits and limitations. Generally these fall into 3 camps:

- **Summary entries with no stock control**
  - Cashbook
  - Batch Invoicing
- **Detailed entries with no stock control**
  - Service Invoices
- **Detailed entries with stock control**
  - Product Invoicing
  - Sales Order Processing

**Cashbook**

Cashbook accounting is a simple way of recording payment and receipt activity from your actual bank in a given bank account in Sage. These entries could be for each individual transaction or as summary entries.

**Benefits and Limitations**

- ✔ Very quick and simple, especially if summary entries are done
- ✗ No customer creation or customer activity
- ✗ No credit control
- ✗ No invoice creation for printing or recording purposes
- ✗ No stock control
- ✗ Poor management information
- ✗ Where there is a mixture of VAT and VAT exempt sales (overseas, non vatable items etc) summary entries need to be broken down. Difficult with large volume sales.

**Batch Invoicing**

Batch invoicing is where a generic customer account is usually created in Sage (eBay Sales, Amazon Sales etc) and then summary sales for a given period are recorded directly against the customer, without the creation of an actual invoice. This does allow outstanding balances against the customer account which can be marked as collected by entering a sales receipt against the customer within the Sage bank module.
Benefits and Limitations

✓ Very quick and simple, especially if summary entries are done
✓ Generic customer created with activity
✓ Allows credit control
✗ No invoice creation for printing or recording purposes
✗ No stock control
✗ Poor management information
✗ Where there is a mixture of VAT and VAT exempt sales (overseas, non vatable items etc) summary entries need to be broken down. Difficult with large volume sales.

Service Invoicing

Service invoicing allows the user to create individual customer records or a single generic customer in Sage and create individual invoices to reflect each online order. Each individual invoice records all details of the order such as billing address, shipping address, shipping cost, each item in the order as a text entry, VAT liability against each item etc.

Once the invoice is completed it can be printed onto customised invoice templates, either physically from a printer or electronically as a PDF, and sent to the customer. When the invoice is updated (or posted) in Sage the details of the sale get recorded against the customer record(s), as does the outstanding balance.

When creating the service invoice the user has the option amend the payment status by allocating the payment to invoice. Effectively this means that when the invoice is posted, the sales receipt for the outstanding debt is automatically entered into a chosen bank account and the debt removed from the customer record. Alternatively, the payment status can be left unchanged and the outstanding debt collected manually by entering a sales receipt against the customer within the Sage bank module.

Benefits and Limitations

✓ Generic and Individual customer(s) created with activity
✓ Allows credit control, both manually and automatically
✓ Creates comprehensive individual invoices for printing and recording purposes
✓ Provides a much higher level of reporting/management information than batch invoicing
✓ Handles VAT on overseas sales
✗ No stock control
Where high volumes of sales, not ideal for mixtures of VAT and VAT exempt products

Takes longer than batch invoicing

**Recommendation**  Tradebox recommend this method of recording sales for online retailers where stock control is **NOT** required and where mixtures of VAT and VAT exempt products are **NOT** sold.

**Product Invoicing**

Product invoicing provides all of the features of service invoicing with the additional benefits of stock control and significantly enhanced reporting/management information such as product performance, product profitability and far greater information at a nominal level.

As with service invoicing users can choose between individual and generic customer accounts. When product invoices are created, the actual products sold in an online order are pulled onto the invoice, with the relevant quantity. If each product record in Sage has been allocated to a specific nominal code, the value of the product sale gets automatically reported to this nominal on the nominal ledger when the invoice is updated. Stock levels against each product on the invoice are also automatically reduced by the quantity purchased when the invoice is updated.

Printing of invoices contains the same functionality as service invoices, as does the ability to amend the payment status and automatically create sales receipts in a nominated Sage bank.

**Benefits and Limitations**

- ✓ Generic and Individual customer(s) created with activity
- ✓ Allows credit control, both manually and automatically
- ✓ Creates comprehensive individual invoices for printing and recording purposes
- ✓ Provides a much higher level of reporting/management information than batch invoicing
- ✓ Handles VAT on overseas sales
- ✓ Provides stock control
- ✓ Handles mixtures of VAT and VAT exempt products for high volumes of orders
- ✓ In-depth reporting
- ✗ Takes longer than batch invoicing

**Recommendation**  Tradebox recommend this method of recording sales for online retailers where stock control is required and where mixtures of VAT and VAT exempt products are sold.
**Sales Orders**

Sales orders are an additional step available within Sage 50 Accounts Professional that can be created prior to the creation of an invoice. One of the main advantages of using Sales Orders is the ability to part fulfil multi item orders and keep track of:

- what orders are awaiting fulfilment
- what orders have been partially fulfilled and what items are outstanding
- what orders have been completely fulfilled

As with service and product invoices, sales orders are tied to an individual or generic customer account in Sage. Upon creation of a sales order, the actual products sold in the online order are pulled onto the sales order, with the relevant quantity. Stock can then be allocated (or reserved) against the sales order, even if the order has not been fulfilled.

Upon marking a sales order as dispatched, the stock level against each product in the sales order is reduced by the relevant quantity and a product invoice is automatically created in the invoice list.

If the sales order can only be partially fulfilled, the user has the ability to select which products and quantities within the order to dispatch using the Goods Despatched Notes (GDN) button. This automatically creates a product invoice in the invoicing list for the items despatched. When the order is marked as complete, a further product invoice will be created for the remaining items.

Sales orders provide all of the features of product invoicing including stock control and significantly enhanced reporting/management information such as product performance, product profitability and far greater information at a nominal level.

**Benefits and Limitations**

- Generic and Individual customer(s) created with activity
- Allows credit control, both manually and automatically
- Creates comprehensive individual orders and invoices for printing and recording purposes
- Provides dispatch notes
- Allows orders to be partially fulfilled
- Provides a much higher level of reporting/management information than batch invoicing
- Handles VAT on overseas sales
Who are Tradebox and how can they help the online retailer?

Tradebox are the authors of Finance Manager, a desktop application designed to integrate online marketplaces and ecommerce websites with Sage Accounts. The purpose of Tradebox Finance Manager is to rapidly download online sales and create entries in Sage Accounts. The Tradebox software records sales in Sage Accounts as service invoices, product invoices or sales orders, all of which can be connected to either individual customer records or generic customer accounts. Tradebox automatically creates financial entries in Sage taking into account VAT rules based upon what is sold and where it is being shipped to in the world.

A video of Tradebox in action can be viewed at, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-16V8f63Kw&hd=1.

Tradebox works with:

- Sage Instant or Sage Instant Accounts Plus from v15 onwards
- Sage 50 Accounts, Sage 50 Accounts Plus and Sage 50 Accounts Professional, v12 onwards.

Pricing for Tradebox Finance Manager is based on an annually recurring licence fee, dependent upon the version of Sage Accounts used and the number of online marketplaces the user wishes to connect with.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connections</th>
<th>Sage Instant Accounts</th>
<th>Sage 50 Accounts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>£240</td>
<td>£480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – 5</td>
<td>£360</td>
<td>£600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 10</td>
<td>£480</td>
<td>£840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlimited</td>
<td>£600</td>
<td>£1200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Annual licence subscription includes:

- Free helpdesk support, available via telephone and email between 9am and 3pm on all working days.
- Free functionality upgrades (on a like for like basis).
## Setting up Sage to work with Tradebox - Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Verify</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compatible version of Sage installed and registered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd party integration activated in Sage Accounts*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set up Sage user specifically for Tradebox**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominal codes created for sales</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominal codes created for expenses/fees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departments created, if required</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic customer accounts created, if required (eBay, Amazon, Web Sales etc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank Accounts set up, as required</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suppliers created, as required</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Products created, if required</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stock levels adjusted against existing products, if required</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Download</strong> and install Tradebox Finance Manager</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Download connection guide for specific marketplace <strong>from within the Tradebox Help menu</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### *Enable 3rd Party Integration in Sage Accounts*

1. In Sage select **Tools – Activation – Enable 3rd Party Integration**.
2. This will take you to a screen prompting you for a serial number and activation key. These are **NOT** the Sage product activation keys but specialist SDO keys. You must phone Sage on the number on the screen and request the SDO or 3rd party activation keys.
3. Enter the keys into the boxes on the screen and select **Save**
4. Repeat on every installation of Sage

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### **Creating Sage user for Tradebox**

1. In Sage select **Settings – Company Preferences – Parameters**
2. Ensure the **Access Rights** button has been checked and select **OK**.
3. Select **Settings – Access Rights**.
4. Create a new username exclusively for the Tradebox Finance Manager software (eg Tradebox) providing full access rights. The creation of an additional user for Tradebox will not count against your Sage user allocation or require an additional user licence
## Sage Accounts comparison table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>Instant Accounts (IA)</th>
<th>Instant Accounts Plus (IA+)</th>
<th>50 Accounts (S50)</th>
<th>50 Accounts Plus (S50+)</th>
<th>50 Accounts Professional (S50 Pro)</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Customer records</td>
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<td>Supplier records</td>
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<td>Create Invoices</td>
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<td>Bank (Cash Book) including bank</td>
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<td>Calculate sales VAT liability</td>
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<td>VAT Return &amp; online submissions</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Records</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handle mixture of VAT &amp; non VAT goods</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analyse products' performance</td>
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<td>Re-order Levels</td>
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<td>Sales Order Processing (SOP)</td>
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<td>Purchase Order Processing (POP)</td>
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<td>❌</td>
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<tr>
<td>Account in Foreign Currencies</td>
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<td>❌</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum Companies available*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RRP (ex VAT &amp; Shipping)</td>
<td>From £120</td>
<td>From £200</td>
<td>From £580</td>
<td>From £840</td>
<td>From £1,135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradebox Prices (ex VAT &amp; Shipping)</td>
<td>From £108</td>
<td>From £180</td>
<td>From £522</td>
<td>From £756</td>
<td>From £1,021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All prices quoted above reflect the standard single user, single company licence with the standard 45 days Sage technical support.

*Additional user licence for Sage IA+ cost an extra £100 + VAT

*Additional user and company licences for all Sage 50 products cost an extra £250 + VAT each.